

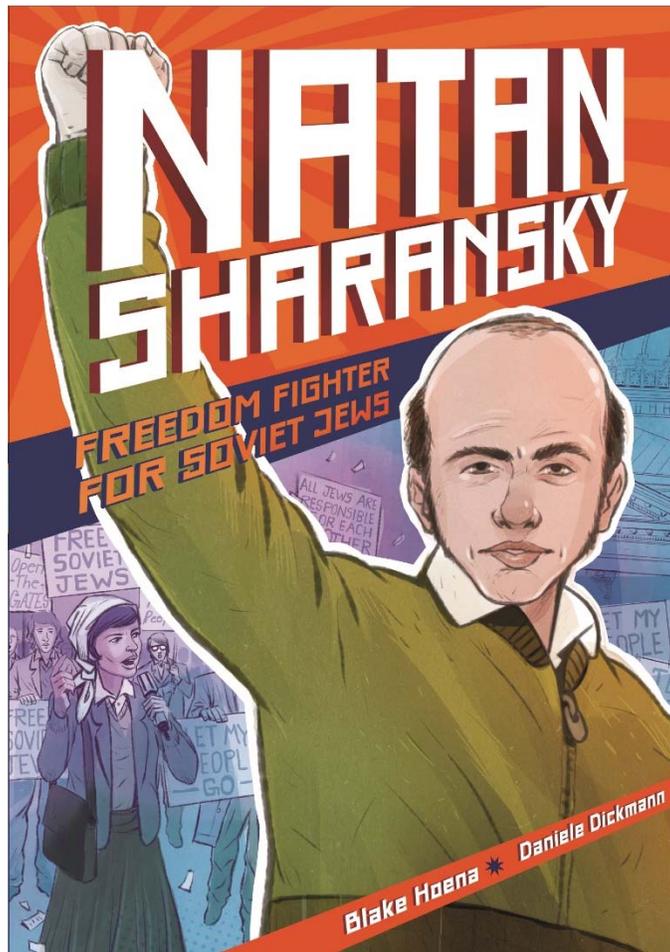
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Resources for Teachers and Students



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About the Author

Blake Hoena has written more than one hundred books for children, including an original graphic novel series, *Eek & Ack*, and graphic novel retellings of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Peter Pan*. Blake lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota, with his wife, two dogs, two cats, and hundreds of comics.

About the Illustrator

Daniele Dickmann is a freelance artist with experience in advertising, movie production, and book illustration. He loves to draw historical stories because they give him a chance to study the personality of the past. Daniele lives and works in Rome, Italy.

Book Summary

This graphic novel biography is the story of Soviet Jewry “refusenik” and human rights activist Anatoly “Natan” Sharansky. Born in 1948 to a Jewish family in Ukraine, at that time part of the Soviet Union, he was arrested as a young man and later imprisoned for wanting to leave the Soviet Union and go to Israel. His struggle became the struggle of all Soviet Jews who wished to leave. With the help of his wife, many Jewish activists, and world leaders, he eventually succeeded in immigrating to Israel, paving the way for the release of other Soviet Jews who wished to live in freedom.

Lesson Objectives

- Understanding who Natan Sharansky is and what he did for the Soviet Jewry
- Considering the concept of *Areyvut* and fighting against injustice
- Thinking of ways an individual is able to make a difference, today.

Give a brief overview of who Natan Sharansky is:

****pair this overview with a slideshow of images from the novel to give visuals of his story**

Natan Sharansky was a man who simply wished to live as a Jew in the Jewish State. Unfortunately, it wasn't that easy. He was arrested and imprisoned for 9 years, all because he wished to leave the Soviet Union for Israel. During this time, and after, he became a human rights activist fighting for the freedom of Soviet Jews to leave freely for Israel. Almost half of his time in prison was spent in solitary confinement, where he spent most of his time playing chess with himself. He, also, with his friends, created a secret code to safely pass messages to and from his prison cell.

But Natan's story is not about just one hero. The heroes of this story include his wife, his family, his friends, and Jews everywhere who answered the call of *Areyvut*: Jews helping fellow Jews in need. Thousands of Jews and others in North America, Israel, and around the world accepted the responsibility to help not just Natan, but all of Soviet Jewry, attain freedom. Activist heroes risked arrest and imprisonment by smuggling prayer books and Jewish texts to those hungry to live Jewish lives. Activists also rallied, petitioned, and lobbied to free Soviet Jewry. Every act that helped Natan and his fellow enslaved Jews gain release was an act of heroism.

Discussion questions:

1. What does it mean to stand up for something you believe in?
2. In what ways is Natan Sharansky a hero?

3. Why do you think chess was important to his time in prison?
4. What are some injustices today that you think are worth fighting for?
5. How can we fight for justice and freedom for Jews today?

Activity: Let's Play Chess

Rules of the game

Natan Sharansky learned how to play chess at a young age, and it's what kept his mind sharp and steady during his long time in prison. Chess is a game that involves strategy, problem solving skills, and critical thinking in order to win. These concepts are pretty similar to the skills needed to fight injustice. Today, we are going to go over the rules of chess and play an introductory game to get you all used to the moves and goals of the game.

Create a display chess board that the students can look at while you're explaining the rules of the game. Either a digital version where you can move pieces on the board, or a large paper version that you can tape paper pieces to. It would be good to have the board labeled as a grid to make the game easier to play.

As you set up the board, explain how each piece moves and give room for questions before moving on. After explaining how each piece move and where to set it up on the board, discuss the goal of the game (checkmate).

Check – A King is in check when the other person has a piece in a position that could take out the king

Checkmate – When the king is unable to move to a safe square

Stalemate – When neither player is able to make any more moves

King – can move 1 square in any direction

Queen – can move forward, backward, or diagonally any amount of squares

Rooks/Castles – can move forward or backwards any amount of squares

Bishop – can move diagonally any amount of squares

Knight – Can move up 2 and over 1 or over 1 and up 2 in any direction (move makes an L shape). The knight is the only piece that can “jump over” all other pieces (of any color) to get to the desired square

Pawn – on first move, can move forward 2 squares. On all other moves, can move forward 1 square. Can only capture pieces diagonally.

Game to play: Ultimate King Hunt

To get you familiar with the rules of the game and how to move pieces, as a class you will be playing as white pieces and attempting to put my king in checkmate.

1. Set-up the board with all the white pieces and with only the king black piece.
2. Students take turns calling out moves for the white pieces in attempt to checkmate the king.
3. The teacher tries to get to stalemate, or a position in which there are no safe squares to move to.